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SUBJECT: ADAMAWA STATE: END OF YEAR SNAPSHOT

CLASSIFIED BY COUNSELOR JAMES MAXSTADT FOR REASONS 1.5 (B & D).

#### BACKGROUND

1. (U) Adamawa State, located on Nigeria's border with Cameroon, is a key battleground for control of Nigeria's political scene. Many important Nigerians hail from Adamawa, including Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and it is the base from which he and others launched on the national scene. Atiku was elected as a PDP governor for Adamawa in 1999 before being selected by President Obasanjo as his running mate. Current governor Boni Haruna was Atiku's handpicked running mate then, and stepped into the position through the Vice President's largesse. Atiku maintains strong influence over Haruna and is also married to the Lamido of Adamawa's daughter.

2. (U) The Lamido (the local equivalent of the Emirs elsewhere in northern Nigeria) is one of the longest serving traditional rulers in Nigeria and the most important ruler in the area. The ruling family was split during the 2003 elections when the Lamido supported the Obasanjo/Atiku ticket, while another branch of the ruling family backed Buhari/Okadigbo and Haruna's ANPP challenger for governor. While the announced results in Adamawa state gave a landslide to the ruling PDP, many observers in the state believe that both Obasanjo/Atiku and Haruna lost the state handily.

#### GOOD GOVERNANCE?

3. (C) If they did, it was largely due to public dismay with Haruna's performance in office before the 2003 elections. It was almost impossible to find anyone outside Vice President's and Governor's retainers with praise for his administration. Critics pointed to the decaying infrastructure, lack of electricity, and complete collapse of small-scale agriculture in the state. Haruna and the Vice President were forced to travel within the state by helicopter to avoid, as one critic said, "being pelted with pieces of the roads as they slowed for potholes." On election day for President and VP, Adamawa witnessed one of the highest levels of political intimidation, abusive security services and ballot stuffing seen in the election across Nigeria.

4. (C) During a recent visit, local PDP politicians told PolOff that Haruna had not improved during his second term. They complained that the state government was unable to pay salaries for at least four months and that pensioners were currently in arrears for more than one year. (Note: Haruna paid two months of the nine month backlog existing the week before elections, but apparently has paid almost nothing since winning. End Note.) Some of the PDP pols were anticipating that the 2007 elections would be an opportunity for change, but one pointed out that since Haruna was not elected in 1999, he could still be eligible to be elected again in 2007. Both opposition and ruling party politicians accused Haruna (and by extension VP Atiku) of milking the state treasury for personal gain. One claimed that Haruna had stashed 200 new vehicles purchased with state money at one of his properties in his hometown of Mubi.

5. (C) A widely acknowledged secret is that Atiku has indeed built at least five new residences in Yola since becoming Vice President, and now owns over 500 buildings throughout the state. Many other properties are said to be held in the name of the Governor and other state officials. According to one newspaper report, Haruna gave a Naira 36 million (USD 275,000) residence in Yola to Vice President Atiku Abubakar's latest wife, Jennifer, because "she wanted it for her new Yola residence." Haruna is said to have immediately purchased an adjacent property for Naira 9 million and begun construction on a new residence for himself.

16. (C) Several other supporters of the Vice President are said to have been building new residences in the same area of Yola in the past few months. Critics also point to a multi-story office complex the governor is building in Yola and another office building belonging to Mr. John Elias, the state commissioner for local government and chieftancy affairs. Elias is also said to have purchased a new BMW and Mercedes and began construction of another office complex in the Nyanya suburb of Abuja.

#### WRONGFUL ARREST

17. (C) All of this building scandal has led to other legal woes. In September, well-known local businessman Alhaji Aliyu Rugange and two associates were arrested on a charge of "attempted mischief" when they took photos of properties belonging to Atiku and the Governor. The police said the arrest of the 56-year old Rugange, a photographer and a driver was ordered by "Abuja." When Rugange's attorney attempted to arrange bail, he was told "only the Vice President can order the men released." A court recently awarded Naira 50,000 in damages to Rugange for the unlawful arrest, but the criminal case against him was only postponed until December. In perhaps a Freudian misprint, one newspaper reported that the case was adjourned because "the persecution (sic) failed to get legal advice on the case."

18. (C) Many opposition politicians in the state have also been arrested or harassed. During the election campaign former Senator Paul Wampana and retired Admiral Murtala Nyako were "escorted" to Abuja, and only allowed to return on election day to vote. According to Nyako, he was taken to State Security Service (SSS) headquarters for a lecture on appropriate behavior, and warned not to interfere with "the military's election day plans." At least two witnesses at the present Federal Appeals Court case against Obasanjo's elections have been detained on their return to Yola, and interrogated by police and the SSS. Counsel for opposition ANPP candidate Buhari protested to the Federal Appeals Court that his witnesses were being intimidated, and complained that this would have a chilling effect on future witnesses.

#### JUDICIAL INTERFERENCE

19. (C) Haruna too has run afoul of the law since his second inauguration. On September 4, the Adamawa State High Court ordered at least three vehicles belonging to Stirling Construction Company impounded over the company's failure to pay a Naira 8.76 million (USD 67,000) debt to one of its suppliers. Stirling Construction - a recipient of many contracts from the Adamawa state government in the past four years - was originally founded by a prominent businessman from Maiduguri about 30 years ago. After falling on hard times during the Abacha years, it is believed that Atiku offered lucrative government contracts from Adamawa State and the GON to Stirling Construction in exchange for a significant ownership interest. Stirling is run today by one of the founder's sons, but he is widely believed to be fronting for Atiku and Haruna.

110. (C) Upset about the legal impoundment of Stirling's vehicles, Haruna reportedly entered the court premises after hours late that evening, September 4, and demanded that court officials be called back in. The court registrar came, a state government appointee told us, and released the vehicles "on the orders of the Governor." After the incident hit the papers, the registrar told reporters he could not comment on the incident, but they should ask state officials about Haruna's involvement. The Governor's office then denied Haruna had gone to the court. The attorney for the plaintiff in the nonpayment suit against Sterling, Mr. Onyi Ekuegbu, commented that the Governor's actions made him "very sad for the rule of law and for the judiciary"

#### COMMENT

111. (C) Haruna was widely viewed as a "do-nothing" governor during his first term and is intensely disliked by both the grass-roots citizens and the political elite in Adamawa. His ties to various businesses are storied, and he is also often rumored to be fronting for Atiku's ownership in several business enterprises. Atiku is presenting himself as a dedicated fighter of corruption in his run for the Presidency

in 2007, and appears to be pressing Haruna to hold down the noise of problems in their home base. With a continuing rift in Adamawa between PDP politicians that won the election and ANPP politicians that believe their party received the most votes, and a split in the royal family there, keeping Adamawa's woes quiet will remain difficult for the near future.  
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